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## **NEWS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 3, 1997

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**Statement of**  
**The Honorable Herbert H. Bateman**  
**Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Readiness**  
**House Committee on National Security**  
**Langley AFB, Virginia, March 3, 1997**

I would like to welcome everyone here to this historic and militarily important Air Force Base. Conducting a readiness hearing here at Langley AFB is significant in that readiness can be seen, heard, and felt first hand here. It is also significant that many of the military services' operational bases are nearby. I believe that it is important to get out in the field and hear from individuals at all levels who are charged with making readiness work. We are here today, not so much as to ask questions, but rather, to listen to our witnesses give their own personal perspectives on current readiness in their units.

There are several reasons why it is important for the members of the committee to travel to the field to hear about readiness. As many will remember, two years ago while the Pentagon leadership was claiming that U.S. forces were more ready than they had ever been, the committee found indications of a serious readiness problem in the military services. At that time, the committee determined the services were in the early stages of a long-term systemic readiness problem that was not confined to any one quarter of a fiscal year.

Some of the indicators that led us to an awareness of these problems were that all of the F-15E and two-thirds of the F-15C air crews based in Europe needed waivers from training requirements, two of the six Army contingency corps units, the most ready in the force, reported significantly reduced readiness ratings, and 28 Navy and Marine Corps tactical aviation squadrons had to ground more than half of their aircraft during September 1994. Although anecdotal, the committee believed that these indicators were indeed warning signs that could not be ignored.

In response to these concerns, the Clinton Administration began taking heed of these warning signs. They have given significant attention to protecting military readiness as one of their primary

objectives in the formulation of subsequent budget requests, including the fiscal year 1998 budget request that is currently before the Congress.

In an attempt to measure the Administration's success these past two years, the committee staff conducted a comprehensive readiness review during the Fall of last year. In addition, I, and many other Members of Congress, have been meeting with members of the military services over the past few months.

The preliminary results of the study and the meetings indicate that readiness is not improving, and may be in a decline. In this context, it is essential that the Readiness Subcommittee test the Pentagon claim that the U.S. military is "as ready as we have ever been."<sup>1</sup>

One of the possible reasons there is such a disparity in the established assessment of readiness by our military leaders, and a more accurate, real-world assessment of readiness, may be founded in the way we measure readiness.

The systems currently in place to measure readiness do not take into account many of the indicators that would give a more accurate readiness picture. Some of these indicators may be the amount of time individuals are away from home; the stresses of working harder and longer and doing more with less; the quantity and quality of military training and other measurements that are not currently used to assess readiness. The subcommittee will further review these concerns at a hearing later this month on how to improve on the way we measure readiness.

Readiness is a perishable commodity — by the time you find out it is broken, it is already too late. I believe this hearing will be one of the most important hearings the subcommittee will have this year. It is important that Members of the Subcommittee hear what is really going on from a cross section of our military service members who are "in the know" on these issues. Our aim today is to hear from those that have to deal with the day-to-day challenges with keeping readiness at an acceptable level.

We are very fortunate to have three panels of individuals representing the four military services and from all levels of command and supervision. The first panel is composed of commanders from major operational commands to give us their views from the big picture point of view. The second panel will have commanders of individual operational units, some that have just returned from a deployment, are getting ready to deploy, and/or have been supporting several deployments recently. Our third panel will consist of senior non-commissioned officers from units represented on panel # 2. I am convinced that the views of senior NCOs, which many consider the backbone of any operational unit, are essential to an accurate assessment of readiness at the working level. I look forward to their unique perspective on these important issues.

Before we get into hearing from our panels, I would like to yield to the Honorable Norman Sisisky, my good friend, neighbor, and the ranking minority member of the subcommittee for any statement he would like to make.

As our first panel of witnesses, we have General Richard E. Hawley, Commander of Air Combat Command, Admiral J. Paul Reason, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, Lt. General John M. Keane, Commanding General, Eighteenth Airborne Corps, and Lt. General Charles E. Wilhelm, Commanding General, U.S. Marine Forces Atlantic.

<sup>1</sup>Gen John Shalikashvili, speaking to the Association of the United States Army Sep 5, 1996

Good morning gentleman. In the interest of time, your written statements will be made a part of the record. We would appreciate it if you would give us a brief summary of your statements.

General Hawley, you may proceed.